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ORDER DENYING OPPOSED MOTION TO EXTEND THE TIME TO FILE A REHEARING (FEBRUARY 2, 2022)

02/02/2022

CLERK ORDER denying opposed motion to extend the time to file a rehearing [9768345-2]; and denying opposed motion to file rehearing out of time, filed by Appellant Ms. Christy Poon-Atkins [9768345-3]. Case Management deadline satisfied. Mandate issue date is 02/10/2022. [21-60467] (DLJ) [Entered: 02/02/2022 01:30 PM]

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JUDGMENT OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT (JANUARY 10, 2022)

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON; WAL-MART STORES EAST, L.P.,

Defendants-Appellees.

No. 21-60467

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi USDC No. 3:19-CV-269

Before: SMITH, STEWART, and GRAVES, Circuit Judges.

This cause was considered on the record on appeal and the briefs on file.

IT IS ORDERED and ADJUDGED that the judgment of the District Court is AFFIRMED.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that plaintiffappellant pay to defendants-appellees the costs on appeal to be taxed by the Clerk of this Court.

OPINION OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT (JANUARY 10, 2022)

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON; WAL-MART STORES EAST, L.P.,

Defendants-Appellees.

No. 21-60467 Summary Calendar

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi USDC No. 3:19-CV-269

> Before: SMITH, STEWART, and GRAVES, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:*

^{*} Pursuant to 5th Circuit Rule 47.5, the court has determined that this opinion should not be published and is not precedent except under the limited circumstances set forth in 5th Circuit Rule 47.5.4.

Plaintiff Christy Poon-Atkins filed this lawsuit on April 19, 2019, to recover for a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Grants Ferry Road, Highway 471, and the entrance of Ambiance subdivision in Brandon, Mississippi. Her vehicle was struck by a car driven by defendant Sammy M. Sappington, who at the time was a Wal-Mart employee. Plaintiff asserts claims for negligence, negligence per se, and negligent infliction of emotional distress against Sappington and Wal-Mart.

Defendants later issued interrogatories, requests for admissions, and requests for documents to the plaintiff, but she failed to timely respond. Plaintiff's counsel then withdrew, and plaintiff notified the district court that she would proceed pro se. The defendants re-sent their discovery requests on March 27, 2020. In their requests for admissions, defendants asked plaintiff to admit that: (i) she "failed to yield the right-of-way to... Defendant Sappington;" (ii) "Sappington [was] not at fault for the subject accident"; and (ii) she is not entitled to any damages or recovery whatsoever as a result of the allegations in the Complaint." Plaintiff never responded to these discovery requests. A year after plaintiff's response was due, the defendants moved for summary judgment, asserting that plaintiff's failure to respond to the requests for admissions deems all requests admitted.

The district court granted summary judgment. Although the district court expressed "symapth[y]" for plaintiff as a pro se litigant, it held that Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 36 "unambiguously" requires dismissal for plaintiff's failure to respond the defendants' admissions requests. Plaintiff timely appealed, and we have jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1291.

"We review a grant of summary judgment de novo, viewing all evidence in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party and drawing all reasonable inferences in that party's favor." Pierce v. Dep't of the Air Force, 512 F.3d 184, 186 (5th Cir. 2007) (citation omitted). "Questions of law are reviewed de novo." Shaikh v. Holder, 588 F.3d 861, 863 (5th Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "[S]ummary judgment is proper if the pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories, and admissions on file, together with the affidavits, if any, show that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that the moving party is entitled to a judgment as a matter of law." Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322 (1986) (internal quotation marks omitted).

Rule 36 governs requests for admissions; it allows parties to serve written requests for admissions to opposing parties. A matter admitted under rule 36 "is conclusively established unless the court, on motion. permits the admission to be withdrawn or amended." Fed. R. Civ. P. 36(b). Rule 36 gives parties thirty days to respond to a request for admission, and the rule provides that an untimely response is deemed an admission. See Fed. R. Civ. Proc. 36(a)(3). Courts have long recognized that summary judgment is proper where a party fails to respond to Rule 36 admissions requests on material facts. E.g., Hulsey v. State of Texas, 929 F.2d 168, 171 (5th Cir. 1991). Rule 56(c) specifies that "admissions on file" can be an appropriate basis for granting summary judgment. Fed. R. Civ. Proc. 56(c). A party who makes an admission, whether express or by default, is bound by that admission for summary judgment purposes—not even contrary evidence can overcome an admission at the

summary judgment stage. In re Carney, 258 F.3d 415, 420 (5th Cir. 2001). Instead, the proper course for a litigant that wishes to avoid the consequences of failing to timely respond to rule 36 requests for admissions is to move the court to amend or withdraw the default admissions in accordance with the standard outlined in rule 36(b). Id.

Plaintiff Poon-Atkins did not respond to the requests for admissions at any time during the litigation below, much less within thirty days after they were served. She likewise did not move to withdraw or otherwise amend the deemed admissions, which went to the heart of her claims against both defendants. And when defendants moved for summary judgment on these grounds. Poon-Atkins did not argue that her failure to respond resulted from oversight; did not dispute having received the requests; did not seek to withdraw her deemed admissions; and did not immediately respond to defendants' requests. Instead, she contends that contrary evidence—namely a police report—rebuts her admission. But rule 36 admissions "are conclusive as to the matters admitted, [and] they cannot be overcome at the summary judgement stage by contradictory affidavit testimony or other evidence in the summary judgment record." In re Carney, 258 F.3d at 420. Poon-Atkins' failure to respond to the defendants' requests for admissions means that the matters are deemed admitted. Those deemed admissions thus conclusively established that she failed to yield the right-of-way to Sappington, and that her "negligence was the sole, proximate cause of the subject accident." With those admissions, Poon-Atkins could not prove the essential elements of any of her claims, and thus there was no genuine dispute that the defendants were entitled to summary judgment.

We have applied rule 36(b) equally and consistently to represented and pro se parties alike, and we have refused to overlook a party's disregard for deadlines regardless of that party's status. E.g., Hill v. Breazeale, 197 F.App'x 331, 337 (5th Cir. 2006) ("The requests for admissions that [the pro se plaintiff] failed to timely respond to concerned essential issues of his claim. These deemed admissions conclusively establish that the defendants engaged in no [wrongdoing]."); Birl v. Estelle, 660 F.2d 592, 593 (5th Cir. 1981) (citations omitted). (noting that a pro se party "acquires no greater rights than a litigant represented by lawyer," and instead "acquiesces in and subjects [her]self to the established rules of practice and procedure"). We AFFIRM the judgment below.

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FINAL JUDGMENT DISMISSING CASE (MAY 17, 2021)

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: Kristi H. JOHNSON, United States District Judge.

For the reasons stated in the Court's Order entered May 17, 2021, and in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56, the Court enters this Final Judgment for Sammy M. Sappington and Wal-Mart Stores East, LP. Christy Poon-Atkins' claims are dismissed with prejudice. This case is closed.

SO ORDERED, this the 17th day of May, 2021.

/s/ Kristi H. Johnson United States District Judge

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ORDER GRANTING SUMMARY JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF DEFENDANTS (MAY 17, 2021)

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: Kristi H. JOHNSON, United States District Judge.

ORDER

This matter is before the Court on Defendants Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, ("Wal-Mart") and Sammy M. Sappington's Motion for Summary Judgment [85]. For these reasons, this Court grants their motion.

I. Background

Plaintiff Christy Poon-Atkins filed this lawsuit on April 19, 2019, to recover for a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Grants Ferry Road, Highway 471, and the entrance of Ambiance subdivision in Brandon, Mississippi. [1], ¶¶ 9-10. Poon-Atkins asserts claims of negligence, negligence as a matter of law, and negligent infliction of emotional distress. See generally id.

Six months later, Defendants propounded Interrogatories and Requests for Production of Documents to Poon-Atkins, but she failed to timely respond. [23]; [24]. Poon-Atkins' former counsel then moved to withdraw as counsel [38], after which she advised the Court of her intention to proceed pro se. [43]. Defendants re-sent the same Interrogatories [45] and Requests for Production of Documents [46], along with Requests for Admission [48] on March 27, 2020. In their Requests for Admission, Defendants requested that Poon-Atkins admit she "failed to yield the right-of-way to ... Defendant Sappington"; "Defendant Sappington [was] not at fault for the subject accident"; her "negligence was the sole, proximate cause of the subject accident"; and she is "not entitled to any damages or recovery whatsoever as a result of the allegations in the Complaint." [86] at 4-5.

Although Poon-Atkins has responded to at least some of Defendants' Requests for Production of Documents, see [107], the record shows she has not responded to their Requests for Admission. The time to respond expired more than a year ago, 1 and to this day, Poon-Atkins has not moved to withdraw or amend her deemed admissions. Defendants now move for summary judgment because Poon-Atkins' failure

¹ Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 36(a)(3), Poon-Atkins' responses were due on or before April 26, 2020.

to respond to Requests for Admission deems all such Requests admitted as a matter of law.

II. Standard

When considering a motion under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56, the Court must "grant summary judgment if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law." Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(a). "A fact is 'material' if, under the applicable substantive law, 'its resolution could affect the outcome of the action." Patel v. Tex. Tech Univ., 941 F.3d 743, 747 (5th Cir. 2019) (quoting Sierra Club, Inc. v. Sandy Creek Energy Assocs., L.P., 627 F.3d 134, 138 (5th Cir. 2010)). "An issue is 'genuine' if 'the evidence is such that a reasonable [factfinder] could return a verdict for the nonmoving party." Jones v. United States, 936 F.3d 318, 321 (5th Cir. 2019) (quoting Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986)). In analyzing a motion for summary judgment, "the judge's function is not [her]self to weigh the evidence and determine the truth of the matter but to determine whether there is a genuine issue for trial." Klocke v. Watson, 936 F.3d 240, 246 (5th Cir. 2019) (quoting Anderson, 477 U.S. at 249).

"If the burden at trial rests on the non-movant, the movant must merely demonstrate an absence of evidentiary support in the record." Bayle v. Allstate Ins. Co., 615 F.3d 350, 355 (5th Cir. 2010) (quoting Hamilton v. Segue Software, Inc., 232 F.3d 473, 477 (5th Cir. 2000)). Once the movant meets this requirement, "the burden shifts to the non-movant to produce evidence of the existence of such an issue for trial." Id. (quoting Miss. River Basin All. v. Westphal, 230

F.3d 170, 174 (5th Cir. 2000)). The non-movant must present more than "speculation, improbable inferences, or unsubstantiated assertions." Jones, 936 F.3d at 321 (quoting Lawrence v. Fed. Home Loan Mortg. Corp., 808 F.3d 670, 673 (5th Cir. 2015)). "A failure on the part of the non-moving party to offer proof concerning an essential element of its case necessarily renders all other facts immaterial and mandates a finding that no genuine issue of fact exists." Adams v. Travelers Indem. Co. of Conn., 465 F.3d 156, 164 (5th Cir. 2006) (citing Saunders v. Michelin Tire Corp., 942 F.2d 299, 301 (5th Cir. 1991)).

II. Analysis

Defendants contend they are entitled to summary judgment on Poon-Atkins' claims because—given her deemed admissions by application of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 36—she cannot prove the essential elements of her negligence-based claims. [86] at 6-7. Rule 36 governs requests for admission and provides, in relevant part:

A party may serve on any other party a written request to admit, for purposes of the pending action only, the truth of any matters within the scope of Rule 26(b)(1) relating to: facts, the application of law to

- (A) fact, or opinions about either; and
- (B) the genuineness of any described document

A matter is admitted unless, within 30 days after being served, the party to whom the request is directed serves on the requesting party a written answer or objection addressed to the matter and signed by the party or its attorney. . . .

. . .

A matter admitted under this rule is conclusively established unless the court, on motion, permits the admission to be withdrawn or amended. Subject to Rule 16(e), the court may permit withdrawal or amendment if it would promote the presentation of the merits of the action and if the court is not persuaded that it would prejudice the requesting party in maintaining or defending the action on the merits. An admission under this rule is not an admission for any other purpose and cannot be used against the party in any other proceeding.

Fed. R. Civ. P. 36(a)(1), (a)(3), (b).

When, as here, the "requests for admissions concern an essential issue, the failure to respond to requests for admission can lead to a grant of summary judgment against the non-responding party." Hill v. Breazeale, 197 F. App'x 331, 336 (5th Cir. 2006) (citing Dukes v. S. C. Ins. Co., 770 F.2d 545, 548-49 (5th Cir. 1985)). The Fifth Circuit and district courts have consistently held this rule applies equally to pro se parties. See Breazeale, 197 F. App'x at 337 ("The requests for admissions that [pro se plaintiff] failed to timely respond to concerned essential issues of his claim. These deemed admissions conclusively establish that the defendants engaged in no [wrongdoing]."); Cottrell v. Career Inst. Inc., 1 F.3d 1237, 1237 (5th Cir. 1993) (holding district court did not err in basing summary judgment on pro se plaintiff's deemed admissions and stating "a district court is not free to amend or withdraw Rule 36 admissions sua sponte"); Love v. Marriot Int'l, Inc., No. 3:11-CV-314-CWR-LRA, 2013 WL 588155 (S.D. Miss. Feb. 11, 2013) (granting summary judgment based on pro se plaintiff's failure to respond to requests for admissions); Carlisle v. Elite Trucking Servs., LLC, No. 1:16-CV-257-JCG, 2017 WL 3653800, at *5 (S.D. Miss. July 6, 2017) (noting pro se parties are not exempt from complying with procedural rules and holding pro se plaintiff's admissions about essential elements of his claims conclusively established no liability).

Poon-Atkins failed to respond to key conclusions that Defendants did not "cause or contribute to the subject accident" or that she suffered "no medical, emotional, or economic damages as a result" of it. [86] at 5-6. And when Defendants moved for summary judgment on these grounds, Poon-Atkins did not argue her failure to respond resulted from oversight; did not dispute having received the requests; did not seek to withdraw her deemed admissions; and did not immediately respond to Defendants' requests. She instead responded that she "provided Notice of Service of Admissions with Admissions and Production to the Defendant on June 23, 2020," referencing "Exhibits A and C." [96] at 6. But Exhibits A and C are simply copies of Wal-Mart's Responses to Requests for Admission and Responses to Requests for Production of Documents. See [96-1]; [96-3]. Nothing in the record shows Poon-Atkins responded to the Requests for Admission that Defendants propounded to her on March 27, 2020.

This Court is sympathetic to the difficulties pro se litigants face when up against technical procedural rules and civil filing requirements. But a pro se plaintiff's "disregard for deadlines and the Federal Rules cannot be overlooked," and Rule 36 "unambiguously states that when a request goes unaddressed for more than 30 days, it is admitted." Love, 2013 WL 588155 at *1 (quoting Hill, 197 F. App'x at 336-37). Since Poon-Atkins' admissions go directly to the essential elements of her negligence-based claims and conclusively establish no liability on Defendants' part—taken together with her previous instances of disregarding deadlines and Court Orders² in this case—this Court must grant summary judgment.

III. Conclusion

The Court has considered all the arguments set forth by the parties. Those arguments not addressed would not have changed the outcome of the Court's decision. For these reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment [85] and DISMISSES WITH PREJUDICE Poon-Atkins' claims. All other dispositive motions (Plaintiff's Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment [97], Defendants' first Motion to Dismiss [104], Defendants' second Motion to Dismiss [150] and Plaintiff's second Motion for Summary Judgment [155]) and all remaining non-dispositive motions (Defendants' Motion to Strike Plaintiff's Response in Opposition to Motion to Compel [99] and both Plaintiff's Motions in Limine [141]; [142]) are

² Though it appears Poon-Atkins responded to certain Requests for Production on September 28, 2020, she refused to provide necessary medical authorizations until after a discovery conference, a Motion to Compel [84], and an Order from this Court with which she finally complied more than a month late. See Text Only Order (Aug. 13, 2020).

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dismissed as moot. A Final Judgment will be entered in accordance with this Order.

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED this the 17th day of May, 2021.

/s/ Kristi H. Johnson United States District Judge

App.17a

ORDER DENYING PLAINTIFF'S MOTION TO COMPEL DISCOVERY PRODUCTION OF THINGS AND SUCH ADMISSIONS (MARCH 26, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: LaKeysha GREER ISAAC, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Plaintiff's Motion to Compel Discovery Production of Things and Such and Admissions [140]. Having considered the briefing of the parties and all exhibits thereto, as well as the arguments of counsel presented to the Court on February 12, 2021, the Court finds the Motion [140] is granted in part and denied in part.

This discovery dispute concerns the scope of discovery and the procedure by which the parties may obtain discoverable information. This Court has broad discretion over both. See Hernandez v. Causey, 2020 WL 5412486, at *3 (S.D. Miss. Sept. 9, 2020) quoting Freeman v. United States, 566 F.3d 326, 341 (5th Cir. 2009) ([i]t is well established that the scope of discovery is within the sound discretion of the trial court."); see also Saucier v. Lakeview Corp., 2014 WL 12906612, at *1 (S.D. Miss. Dec. 30, 2014) ("[a] district court has "broad discretion" to control the procedure for obtaining discoverable material.").

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 37 governs motions to compel discovery responses. Rule 37 provides that a party seeking discovery may move for an order compelling production against another party when the latter has failed to produce documents requested under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 34 or to answer an interrogatory under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 33. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(a)(3)(B). "[A]n evasive or incomplete disclosure, answer, or response must be treated as a failure to disclose, answer, or respond." Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(a)(4).

Local Rule 7(b)(C) states "[a] party must file a discovery motion sufficiently in advance of the discovery deadline to allow response to the motion, ruling by the court and time to effectuate the court's order before the discovery deadline." L.U.Civ.R. 7(b)(C). The Local Rules also require the movant to "quote verbatim each interrogatory, request for production, or request for admission." L.U.Civ.R. 37(c). Additionally, "written in immediate succession to the quoted discovery request" the movant should specify the objections, grounds and reasons assigned as supporting the

motion. *Id.* Plaintiff, proceeding *pro se*, filed this Motion on the date of the discovery deadline and failed to outline the specific written discovery requests that were perceived to be outstanding. The Court held a telephonic Motion Hearing on February 12, 2021 to hear argument from the parties.

Lack of communication appears to be at the heart of the parties' dispute about the discovery provided, as well as the misunderstandings that have ensued regarding the same. Following the February 12, 2021 Motion Hearing, the Court ordered Defendants to provide Plaintiff a document log specifying the bates range of documents provided to Plaintiff, as well as a CD with a complete copy of documents produced by Defendant to provide Plaintiff a clear record of discovery. The Defendant's filed a Notice of Compliance with Court Order [163] upon timely providing Plaintiff the required document log entitled Index of Defendants' Document Production along with CDs containing complete copies of all documents previously produced by Defendants. Discovery in this matter is now closed and the Court declines to grant further general relief requested in *Plaintiff's Motion to Compel* Discovery Production of Things and Such and Admissions [140].

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the *Plaintiff's Motion to Compel Discovery Production of Things and Such and Admissions* [140] is granted to the extent of the Court's Text-Only Order entered on February 12, 2021, to which the Defendants have complied. It is further ordered that the period for Discovery in this matter is closed.

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SO ORDERED this the 26th day of March, 2021.

/s/ LaKeysha Greer Isaac United States Magistrate Judge

App.21a

ORDER DENYING PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR SANCTIONS AND DEFENDANT'S MOTION FOR ATTORNEY'S FEES (MARCH 26, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI Before: LaKeysha GREER ISAAC, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Plaintiff's Motion for Sanctions [136] and Defendant's Response to Plaintiff's Frivolous Motion for Sanctions and Request for Attorney's Fees and Dismissal [147, 149]. Having considered the briefing of the parties and all exhibits thereto, as well as the arguments of counsel presented to the Court on February 12, 2021, the Court finds the Plaintiff's Motion for Sanctions [136] and Defendant's Response to Plaintiff's Frivolous

Motion for Sanctions and Request for Attorney's Fees and Dismissal [147, 149] are not well taken and shall be DENIED.

Plaintiff asserts that Defendants have failed to respond her discovery requests and should be sanctioned by the Court for their failure to cooperate. Defendants contend that they have complied with all discovery requests. Defendants further argue that they are entitled to costs, fees and expenses associated with responding to the Plaintiff's Motion for Sanctions under Fed. R. Civ. P. 11, 26, and 37.

Although Plaintiff and Defendants requested sanctions under Rule 11, neither party complied with Rule 11's procedural "safe harbor" requirements. Rule 11 provides, in relevant part:

A motion for sanctions must be made separately from any other motion and must describe the specific conduct that allegedly violates Rule 11(b). The motion must be served under Rule 5, but it must not be filed or be presented to the court if the challenged paper, claim, defense, contention, or denial is withdrawn or appropriately corrected within 21 days after service or within another time the court sets. If warranted, the court may award to the prevailing party the reasonable expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred for the motion.

Fed. R. Civ. P. 11(c)(1)(A). "The plain language of the rule indicates that this notice and opportunity prior to filing is mandatory." *Elliott v. Tilton*, 64 F.3d 213, 216 (5th Cir. 1995). In *Elliott*, the Fifth Circuit held that when the moving party fails to comply with this

"safe harbor" provision, a Rule 11 sanction cannot be upheld. *Id*.

The parties also request sanctions and fees under Rule 26 and Rule 37. Under Rule 37, the Court may impose "just" sanctions, including the payment of reasonable expenses, including attorney's fees, caused by a party's failure to comply with discovery orders. Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(b)(2); see also Tollett v. City of Kemah, 285 F.3d 357, 368 (5th Cir. 2002). Although sanctions under the Court's inherent power require a finding of bad faith, sanctions under Rule 37 do not." Sample v. Miles, 239 F. App'x 14, 21 n. 20 (5th Cir. 2007) (punctuation omitted). Even negligent failures to comply with discovery orders fall within Rule 37. PIC Group, Inc. v. LandCoast Insulation, Inc., No. 1:09-CV-662-KS-MTP, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 73342 (S.D. Miss. July 7, 2011); see also Coane v. Ferrara Pan Candy Co., 898 F.2d 1030, 1032 (5th Cir. 1990).

The record reflects that both parties have failed to follow the discovery rules for seeking sanctions. Lack of communication appears to be at the heart of the parties' dispute about the discovery provided, as well as the misunderstandings that have ensued regarding the same. Following the February 12, 2021 Motion Hearing, the Court ordered Defendants to provide Plaintiff a document log specifying the bates range of documents provided to Plaintiff, as well as a CD with a complete copy of documents produced by Defendant to provide Plaintiff, proceeding pro se, a clear record of discovery. Discovery in this matter is now closed and the Court declines to grant sanctions or fees to either party.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that *Plaintiff's Motion for Sanctions* [136] and *Defen-*

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dant's Response to Plaintiff's Frivolous Motion for Sanctions and Request for Attorney's Fees and Dismissal [147, 149] are DENIED. It is ordered that the Defendants will not be sanctioned. It is further ordered that Defendants are not entitled to costs, fees and expenses associated with responding to the Plaintiff's Motion for Sanctions.

SO ORDERED this the 26th day of March, 2021.

<u>/s/ LaKeysha Greer Isaac</u> United States Magistrate Judge

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ORDER DENYING MOTION FOR EXTENDING TIME FOR DISCOVERY (MARCH 25, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: LaKeysha GREER ISAAC, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the *Plaintiff's Motion for Extending Time for Discovery* [138]. Having considered the briefing of the parties, as well as the arguments of counsel presented to the Court on February 12, 2021, the Court finds that the Motion [138] is not well taken and shall be DENIED.

The initial discovery deadline in this matter was set for March 31, 2020. The Court granted two extension requests allotting an additional ten (10) months

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for the parties to resolve discovery by January 25, 2021. The period for discovery in this matter lapsed on January 25, 2021. Following the February 12, 2021 Motion Hearing, the Court ordered Defendants to provide Plaintiff a document log specifying the bates range of documents provided to Plaintiff, as well as a CD with a complete copy of documents produced by Defendant. Beyond the Court's limited Order entered February 12, 2021, the Court declines to extend time for discovery.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the discovery deadline shall not be extended.

SO ORDERED this the 25th day of March, 2021.

/s/ LaKeysha Greer Isaac
United States Magistrate Judge

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ORDER ON PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR COURT-APPOINTED EXPERT WITNESS WITH COMPENSATION UNDER THE FIFTH AMENDMENT (FEBRUARY 25, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

V

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: LaKeysha GREER ISAAC, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Plaintiff's Motion for Court-Appointed Expert Witness with Compensation Under the Fifth Amendment [154]. The undersigned has considered the Defendants' Response in Opposition to Plaintiff's Motion for Court-Appointed Expert Witnesses with Compensation Under the Fifth Amendment [164], and Plaintiff's Objection to Defendants' Response in Opposition to Plaintiff's

Motion for Court-Appointed Expert Witnesses with Compensation Under the Fifth Amendment [166]. The Court finds the Motion [154] is denied.

Plaintiff argues that the Court should appoint an expert for her under Federal Rule of Evidence 706. "Rule 706 contemplates the appointment of an expert to aid the court." Hannah v. United States, 523 F.3d 597, 600 (5th Cir. 2008) (citing Christopher B. Mueller & Laird C. Kirkpatrick, 3 Federal Evidence §§ 7:25, 7:26 (3d ed. 2007)). The Plaintiff seeks an expert for her own benefit, rather than for the benefit of the Court. Further, Plaintiff did not move for appointment of an expert until after the deadline for disclosure of experts.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that *Plaintiff's Motion* for Court-Appointed Expert Witness with Compensation Under the Fifth Amendment [154] is denied.

SO ORDERED this the 25th day of February, 2021.

/s/ LaKeysha Greer Isaac United States Magistrate Judge

App.29a

ORDER ON PLAINTIFF'S REQUEST FOR VIRTUAL CONFERENCE (FEBRUARY 25, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: LaKeysha GREER ISAAC, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the *Plaintiff's Request for Virtual Conference* [127]. The Court held a Motion Hearing by video conference on February 12, 2021 at 2:30 PM.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Plaintiff's Request for Virtual Conference [127] is moot.

App.30a

SO ORDERED this the 25th day of February, 2021.

<u>/s/ LaKeysha Greer Isaac</u> United States Magistrate Judge

ORDER ON NOTICE OF SERVICE OF REQUEST FOR DEPOSITION (FEBRUARY 25, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LGI

Before: LaKeysha GREER ISAAC, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE came before the Court upon the Plaintiff's Notice of Service of Request for Deposition [120], wherein Plaintiff requests that deposition dates be provided for the deposition of Defendant Sammy Sappington as well as for the depositions of expert witnesses John D. Davis, M.D. and Benjamin M. Smith, ACTAR, MSA. The Defendant's Response to Plaintiff's Motion/Notice of Service for Deposition [123] states the Defendant provided potential dates to Plaintiff for the requested depositions. Plaintiff replied with a

Response to Defendant's Request for Witness to be Paid for Deposition [125], in which Plaintiff requests that the Court waive costs associated with the expert depositions.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Plaintiff's Response to Defendant's Request for Witness to be Paid for Deposition [125] is denied, as Defendants' experts are entitled to charge a reasonable fee for attendance at deposition. It is further ordered that Plaintiff's Notice of Service of Request for Deposition [120] is moot, as Defendants have provided availability for deposition as requested.

SO ORDERED this the 25th day of February, 2021.

<u>/s/ LaKeysha Greer Isaac</u> United States Magistrate Judge

AGREED ORDER OF DISMISSAL WITH PREJUDICE AS TO PLAINTIFF'S LOST WAGES CLAIM (JANUARY 12, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-269-HTW-LRA

Before: Henry T. WINGATE, United States District Court Judge.

CAME ON FOR CONSIDERATION, the joint motion ore tenus of Plaintiff, Christy Poon-Atkins, and Defendants, Sammy M. Sappington and Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, to dismiss Plaintiff's claim for lost wages with prejudice, and the Court, being advised of the premises, finds the same is well-taken and should be granted. It is, therefore,

App.34a

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, that Plaintiff's claim for lost wages are hereby dismissed with prejudice. It is further,

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, that the dismissal with prejudice of Plaintiffs claim for lost wages shall have no effect on the remaining allegations in the Complaint.

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, this the 11th day of January, 2021.

/s/ Henry T. Wingate
United States District Court Judge

Agreed:

/s/ Christy Poon-Atkins Plaintiff, Pro Se

/s/ Scott Ellzey, Esq.
Scott Ellzey, Esq
Drury S. Holland, Esq.
Attorney for Defendants

ORDER TO REASSIGN CASES (JANUARY 5, 2021)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

Before: Daniel P. JORDAN III, Chief U.S. District Judge.

IN ORDER TO equitably manage and distribute the caseload of the court in light of the retirement of United States Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson, pursuant to the authority of the court as set forth in Section IV of Internal Rule 1 as amended effective December 21, 2020, the court finds that each of the cases listed on the attached Exhibits A and B should be and they are hereby reassigned from United States Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson to United States Magistrate Judge LaKeysha Greer Isaac.

Any matters which have been scheduled in these cases before Judge Anderson will be rescheduled and noticed by Judge Isaac as necessary.

SO ORDERED, this the 5th day of January, 2021.

/s/ Daniel P. Jordan III Chief U.S. District Judge

ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS' MOTION FOR ATTORNEY EXPENSES (DECEMBER 22, 2020)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON; AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP; AND GARRISON PROPERTY AND CASUALTY INSURANCE COMPANY,

Defendants.

Cause No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LRA

Before: Linda R. ANDERSON, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS cause is before the Court on Defendants' motion for attorney's fees [103] and Plaintiff's response to the Court's prior Order to Show Cause entered on December 4, 2020. Defendants have requested that an Order be entered assessing attorney's fees and costs in the amount of \$554.00, due to the costs they incurred in attempting to obtain the proper medical releases from Plaintiff. Since the date of that motion was filed, September 18, 2020, an additional hearing

has been conducted. Plaintiff filed a response [117] attempting to explain why she failed to provide the executed HIPAA and other authorizations after being ordered to do so by the Court on at least two prior occasions.

The undersigned finds that Plaintiff has established no good cause to excuse her continued failure to provide the HIPAA and medical authorizations required by the law and by this Court. Defendants incurred costs in attempting to obtain these documents, and they were entitled to them as of the date the CMO was entered, August 16, 2019, well over a year ago. The amount set forth in Defendants' invoice is certainly reasonable. However, Plaintiff's response indicates she still does not fully understand her violations of the discovery requirements and her duty to fully obey the Court's orders. Because of these reasons, and the fact that she is proceeding pro se, the Court will reduce the amount of costs she is required to pay on this occasion. If further violations occur, full costs will be awarded.

The Court liberally construes Plaintiff's pleading [108] as a response to Defendants' attempts to obtain her medical authorizations. Because the Court finds that she is unjustified in failing to provide these documents, her motion shall be denied.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

- 1. Defendants' motion for attorney's fees [103] is granted.
- 2. Plaintiff is directed to pay Defendants the sum of \$250 to partially recompense them for expenses and costs they incurred in obtaining medical releases from Plaintiff.

App.38a

- 3. Plaintiff shall pay the award of expenses to Defendants on or before *February 1, 2021*.
- 4. Plaintiff's motion [108] is denied.

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, this the 22nd day of December 2020.

/s/ Linda R. Anderson
United States Magistrate Judge

ORDER OF DISMISSAL WITH PREJUDICE AS TO PLAINTIFF'S LOSS WAGES CLAIM (DECEMBER 21, 2020)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 3:19-CV-00269-KHJ-LRA

Before: Kristi H. JOHNSON, United States District Judge.

CAME ON FOR CONSIDERATION, the joint motion ore tenus of Plaintiff, Christy Poon-Atkins, and Defendants, Sammy M. Sappington and Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, to dismiss Plaintiff's claim for loss wages with prejudice, and the Court, being advised of the premises, finds the same is well-taken and should be granted. It is, therefore,

App.40a

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, that Plaintiff's claim for loss wages are hereby dismissed with prejudice. It is further,

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, that the dismissal with prejudice of Plaintiff's claim for loss wages shall have no effect on the remaining allegations in the Complaint.

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, this the 21 day of December 2020.

/s/ Kristi H. Johnson United States District Judge

AGREED:

/s/ Christy Poon-Atkins
Plaintiff, pro se

/s/ Scott Ellzey, Esq.
Drury S. Holland, Esq.
Attorneys for Defendants

App.41a

ORDER REASSIGNING CIVIL CASES (DECEMBER 14, 2020)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI

Before: Daniel P. JORDAN III, Chief U.S. District Judge.

PURSUANT TO Section IV of Internal Rule 1, as amended effective August 3, 2020, and to equitably manage and distribute the caseload of the Court due to the recent confirmation of two new United States District Judges, and with the consent of the affected judges, the civil cases set forth on the attached Exhibit A are reassigned to U.S. District Judge Kristi H. Johnson.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that (1) the present Magistrate Judge assignment for these cases will remain unchanged, and (2) a copy hereof be docketed in each case listed above.

SO ORDERED, this the 14th day of December, 2020.

/s/ Daniel P. Jordan III Chief U.S. District Judge

App.42a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS' MOTION TO COMPEL (DECEMBER 4, 2020)

12/04/2020

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting 112 (p.1167) Motion to Compel. Plaintiff is directed to show cause, in writing, on or before December 14, 2020 as to why costs should not be awarded for this Second Motion to Compel. NO WRITTEN ORDER TO FOLLOW. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 12/4/20 (Lewis, Nijah) (Entered: 12/04/2020)

App.43a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS' MOTION TO COMPEL AS CONFESSED (AUGUST 13, 2020)

08/13/2020

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting Defendants' 84 (p.274) Motion to Compel as confessed; Plaintiff has not filed a response. Plaintiff is ordered to provide the HIPPA authorization and other documents described in the motion on or before 8/25/2020. She should also show cause by that date, in writing, as to why she should not be assessed with expenses. NO WRITTEN ORDER TO FOLLOW. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 8/13/2020. (ACF) (Entered: 08/13/2020)

App.44a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING IN PART AND DENYING IN PART MOTION TO MODIFY CASE MANAGEMENT ORDER (JUNE 29, 2020)

06/29/2020

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting in part and denying in part 80 (p.252) Motion to Modify Case Management Order. NO FURTHER WRITTEN ORDER SHALL ISSUE. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 6/29/20 (Lewis, Nijah) (Entered: 06/29/2020)

App.45a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS' MOTION FOR PROTECTIVE ORDER (JUNE 29, 2020)

06/29/2020

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting, with no objection from the Plaintiff 81 (p.258) Motion for Protective Order. NO FURTHER WRITTEN ORDER SHALL ISSUE. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 6/29/20 (Lewis, Nijah) (Entered: 06/29/2020)

App.46a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO RESTRICT ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS (JUNE 11, 2020)

06/11/2020

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting 77 (p.241) Motion to Restrict Access to Documents. The Clerk is directed to restrict access to the case participants as to the documents listed in the motion. NO WRITTEN ORDER TO FOLLOW. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 6/11/2020. (ACF) (Entered: 06/11/2020)

App.47a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING FOR GOOD CAUSE (MARCH 5, 2020)

03/05/2020

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting, for good cause, [] Motion to Amend/Correct Scheduling Order. NO FURTHER WRITTEN ORDER SHALL ISSUE. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 3/5/20 (Lewis, Nijah) (Entered: 03/06/2020)

App.48a

TEXT ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE (JANUARY 29, 2020)

01/29/2020

41 (p.163)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE. Show Cause Response due by 2/18/2020. The Clerk is directed to mail a copy of this Order to Plaintiff at the address listed and to alter the docket to reflect Plaintiff's address. Plaintiff is advised that her failure to comply with this Order before 2/18/2020 shall result in the dismissal of her Complaint. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 1/29/2020. (ACF) (Entered: 01/29/2020)

App.49a

ORDER ALLOWING WITHDRAWAL OF COUNSEL OF RECORD, EXTENSION OF DEADLINES AND EXTENSION OF TIME TO RESPOND TO DISCOVERY (DECEMBER 10, 2019)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI NORTHERN DIVISION

CHRISTY POON-ATKINS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SAMMY M. SAPPINGTON; AND WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP; AND GARRISON PROPERTY AND CASUALTY INSURANCE COMPANY,

Defendants.

Cause No. 3:19-CV-269-KHJ-LRA

Before: Linda R. ANDERSON, United States Magistrate Judge.

THIS CAUSE, this day, having come on the *Motion* of undersigned counsel for Plaintiff, Christy Poon-Atkins, Derek L. Hall, Esq., and Megan E. Timbs, Esq., Attorneys of Derek L. Hall, PC, seeking an *Order* allowing its withdrawal as counsel of record in this matter, and the Court, having been advised in its premises, first finds that it has jurisdiction over

the parties and the subject matter, and further finds that the *Motion* is well-taken and should be granted.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that movants Derek L. Hall, Esq., and Megan E. Timbs, Esq., Attorneys of Derek L. Hall, PC, shall serve a copy of this Order on Plaintiff by delivery to her, certified mail, return receipt requested, and shall thereafter file a certificate of such service in this cause. Mr. Hall and Ms. Timbs shall only be considered withdrawn and relieved of responsibility in this cause to the Court when the certificate is filed with the Court. Thereafter, Derek L. Hall, Esq., and Megan E. Timbs, Esq., Attorneys of Derek L. Hall, PC, are hereby released as counsel of record for Plaintiff, Christy Poon-Atkins, and from any further representation on behalf of Plaintiff or any further responsibilities or liabilities related thereto.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that Plaintiff, Christy Poon-Atkins, is hereby granted until January 28, 2020 to acquire new counsel of record, or to place this Court on notice of her intent to proceed pro se. Should Plaintiff fail to notify the Court of her retention of new counselor of her intent to proceed pro se on or before January 28, 2020, Plaintiff's cause of action shall be dismissed without prejudice without further notice.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that all currently set deadlines are stayed pending entry of new counsel, and that Plaintiff shall have an additional thirty (30) days to respond to Defendant's first set of discovery after entry of new counsel.

App.51a

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, this the 10th day of December 2019.

<u>/s/ Linda R. Anderson</u>
United States Magistrate Judge

Prepared by:

/s/ Megan E. Timbs
Derek L. Hall (MSB# 10194)
Megan E. Timbs (MSB# 105331)
Counsel of Record for Plaintiff

App.52a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO EXTEND EXPERT DEADLINES (NOVEMBER 19, 2019)

11/19/2019

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting unopposed 28 (p.130) Motion to Extend Expert Deadlines. Designate Experts Plaintiff Deadline due by 2/3/2020; Designate Experts for Defendant Deadline due by 3/4/2020. NO WRITTEN ORDER TO FOLLOW. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 11/19/2019. (ACF) (Entered: 11/19/2019)

App.53a

AGREED TEXT ORDER OF DISMISSAL WITHOUT PREJUDICE (AUGUST 21, 2019)

08/21/2019

14 (p.94)

AGREED ORDER OF DISMISSAL WITHOUT PREJUDICE granting 8 (p.68) Motion to Dismiss. IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that all claims made by the Plaintiff, Christy Poon-Atkins, against the Defendant, Garrison Property and Casualty Insurance Company, are hereby dismissed without prejudice, with each party to bear their respective costs. Signed by District Judge Henry T. Wingate on 8/20/2019 (VM) (Entered: 08/21/2019)

App.54a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING EXTENSION OF TIME TO ANSWER (JUNE 13, 2019)

06/13/2019

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting 4 (p.38) Motion for Extension of Time to Answer. Garrison Property and Casualty Insurance Company answer due 7/12/2019. NO FURTHER WRITTEN ORDER SHALL ISSUE. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 6/13/19 (Lewis, Nijah) (Entered: 06/13/2019)

App.55a

TEXT ORDER GRANTING EXTENSION OF TIME TO ANSWER (JUNE 11, 2019)

06/11/2019

TEXT ONLY ORDER granting 3 (p.36) Motion for Extension of Time to Answer Sammy M. Sappington answer due 7/11/2019; Wal-Mart Associates, Inc. answer due 7/11/2019. NO FURTHER WRITTEN ORDER SHALL ISSUE. Signed by Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson on 6/11/19 (Lewis, Nijah) (Entered: 06/11/2019)

